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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 77
By McDonald

A RESOLUTION memorializing the U.S. Congress to enact the Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century (STEP 21).

WHEREAS, the authorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), which has appropriated over \$150 billion for our nation's highway, transit, motor carrier, safety and research programs during the past six (6) years, is due to expire on September 30, 1997; and

WHEREAS, as Congressional reauthorization of ISTEA fast approaches, it is imperative for all viable alternatives that provide more equitable transportation funding support for the states to be carefully considered; and

WHEREAS, the Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century (STEP 21) is a large, multi-state coalition of state departments of transportation that has developed a proposal to reorient the nation's surface transportation program toward the 21st Century; and

WHEREAS, STEP 21 limits its proposal to the highway mode and focuses on a few critical issues in the federal highway plan - flexibility, equity, streamlining and funding distribution; and

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WHEREAS, in fact, STEP 21 builds on traditional ISTEA partnerships, while modernizing federal aid formulas that are inadequate to meet the mobility and economic development needs of the next century; and

WHEREAS, STEP 21's evolutionary approach provides the following benefits:

(1) Appropriately funds the National Highway System as the key federal responsibility in surface transportation. This program will benefit the entire nation by providing consistent mobility, connectivity, and economic benefit for all states;

(2) Recognizes states' diversity and provides the flexibility to tailor transportation solutions to their particular circumstances by reaffirming ISTEA planning processes, returning decision-making to the state and local levels, and eliminating federal mandates;

(3) Benefits every state through program simplification and streamlining and an overwhelming number of states by returning an equitable amount of Highway Trust Fund contributions to states for their own unique transportation needs; and

(4) To correct the growing disparity among Highway Trust Fund dollars received by states, STEP 21 more equitably balances payments made to, and the funds received from, the federal Highway Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, under STEP 21, the National Highway System would receive forty percent (40%) of federal highway funding, while the remaining sixty percent (60%) would be allocated to the Streamlined Surface Transportation Program, to allow states to respond to their specific and state local surface transportation needs in a flexible manner; and

WHEREAS, perhaps, the most significant provision of STEP 21 for Tennessee is the guarantee that all states receive no less than ninety-five percent (95%) of their share of contributions to the federal Highway Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, under the present provisions of ISTEA, Tennessee is a donor state, i.e. a state that contributes more to than it receives from the federal Highway Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, during the federal fiscal years 1992 through 1995, Tennessee received an average of only seventy-eight percent (78%) of our contributions to the federal Highway Trust Fund Highway Account, while at least one (1) state received a whopping four hundred ninety-nine percent (499%) return; and

WHEREAS, STEP 21's guarantee that all states receive no less than ninety-five (95%) of their share of contributions to the federal Highway Trust Fund effectively addresses the present inequities in federal highway funding to the states by assuring the twenty-five (25) donor states, including Tennessee, that whatever amount is distributed from the trust fund, no more than five cents (\$0.05) of each dollar contributed is transferred to other states; this amount, combined with other funding states receive, should be sufficient to address pressing national needs, such as the National Highway System; and

WHEREAS, the enactment of this provision of STEP 21 by the U.S. Congress could generate up to \$100 million annually in additional funds for transportation projects in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, STEP 21 does an excellent job of restoring the original intent of ISTEA, and such legislation is appropriately entitled "The Integrity Restoration Act"; and

WHEREAS, the STEP 21 legislation establishes a streamlined highway program structure and an updated, equitable funding allocation system which will allow each state to respond to its diverse needs, striking an appropriate balance between the national interest in highways, and the rights and responsibilities of every state; and

WHEREAS, as the 21st Century draws ever closer, this General Assembly finds that the importance of the nation's and the state's surface transportation system cannot be overstated, as there is ample evidence documenting the link between careful transportation infrastructure investment and increases in this nation's and state's productivity and economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, the addition of \$100 million per year in federal funds for transportation projects in Tennessee is vitally important to the necessary expansion and improvement of our highway system for a fluid transition into the 21st Century; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That this General Assembly hereby memorializes the U.S. Congress to act expeditiously to enact the Streamlined Transportation Efficiency Program for the 21st Century (STEP 21) proposal, short titled as "The ISTEA Integrity Restoration Act", or failing such action to include the STEP 21 provision that guarantees all states a ninety-five percent (95%) return on their total contributions to the federal Highway Trust Fund as part of the ISTEA reauthorization act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this General Assembly memorializes each member of the U.S. Congress from Tennessee to utilize the full measure of his or her influence to effect the enactment of "The ISTEA Integrity Restoration Act" or STEP 21 legislation, and especially the provision guaranteeing all states a ninety-five percent (95%) return on their total contributions to the federal Highway Trust Fund.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the Honorable Bill Clinton, President of the United States; the President and the Secretary of the U.S. Senate; the Speaker and the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives; and to each member of the Tennessee delegation to the U.S. Congress.